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REPORT

OF THE

Special Committee of the School Committee,

ON THE

COMMUNICATION OF P. H. WENTWORTH, Esq.,

IN RELATION TO THE

LATE EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR ADMISSION
TO THE ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL, &c.



ROXBURY:
NORFOLK COUNTY JOURNAL PRESS.
1857.

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE, Sept. 3, 1857.

ORDERED, That the Report of the Special Committee on the communication of P. H. WENTWORTH, Esq., be accepted, the accompanying Order adopted, and that twelve hundred copies be printed, for distribution among the citizens and for the use of the Board.

Attest:

A. I. CUMMINGS,
Secretary of the Board.

The Committee to whom was referred the communication of P. H. WENTWORTH, Esq., in relation to the late Examination of Candidates for Admission to the ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL, and all matters connected therewith, beg leave to present the following

R E P O R T :

YOUR Committee have endeavored to ascertain all the facts in relation to the subject referred to them. They held a public meeting on the evening of August 6th, at which all interested were invited to be present, and to lay before the Committee any facts they deemed of importance.

A special invitation was sent to Mr. Wentworth, and, also, to the Trustees of the English High School.

The meeting was not largely attended; but from members of the Board of Trustees, from parents and teachers who were present, and from other sources, your Committee received such information as was requisite to enable them to come, as they think, to a clear understanding of the whole matter.

It appears that public notice of the time of examination was given by order of the Board of Trustees, stating that candidates must be at least twelve years of age, must bring a certificate of good moral character from the teacher of the school last attended, and be able to pass a satisfactory examination in Spelling, Writing, English Grammar, Arithmetic, Modern Geography, and the History of the United States.

On the day assigned, *thirty-seven* candidates presented themselves.

The examination was conducted in the presence of some one of the Board of Trustees; and, we believe, in the usual manner. The questions to which the candidates were required to write the answers, were substantially those used at the examination for admission to the English High School in Boston last year. The teachers of the High School, assisted by two or three of the older scholars, looked over the boys' papers, and arranged the results in tabular form. These results, together with the papers, were laid before the Local Committee of the school, consisting of *six* members from the Board of Trustees and *three* from the School Committee. In Written Arithmetic, Geography, Grammar, History and Spelling, each scholar was credited with what he correctly performed in each. But in Reading, Writing, Oral Arithmetic, and Map Drawing, the boys were marked according to the estimate of the examiner.

Thus, assuming *ten* as a mark for perfect reading, each boy was marked as much below that, as the quality of his performance seemed to indicate. It will be seen that there were nine studies. The Local Committee decided that *seventy-five* per cent. in *each* study should be required for admission; and that seventy-five per cent. in each of six studies should admit to a second examination. No one had that per cent. in each study, and, of course, no one was unconditionally admitted. One boy had the required per cent. in each study excepting Reading, Writing, and Map Drawing, and he was admitted on condition that he would make up his deficiency in those.

The rest of the candidates were rejected.

A few came pretty near the standard, but most fell far behind. A result at which your Committee are not at all surprised.

It will be seen, at once, that these candidates were sub-

jected to a very severe test. It demands of each boy that he be good in everything. It requires an evenness of development, which must cost much time and pains on the part of our teachers to accomplish, and which in many cases can not be effected. A boy may be very poor in Map Drawing and Penmanship, and yet a very fine scholar in all other respects.

Some may be excellent in Geography, and yet have so much difficulty in remembering dates as to stumble in History. Those scholars who are excellent in everything are exceedingly rare. While your Committee would strongly urge that special pains should be taken in our schools to strengthen those faculties that are naturally weak, they do not think it just to demand such an evenness of development, and yet so complete, of boys *twelve*, *thirteen*, and *fourteen* years of age. Indeed, they believe if all the scholars in the best schools in Massachusetts sixteen years of age, should be measured by this standard, a large proportion of them would fail in one or more points. Should it be applied to the present pupils of our English High School, its number would probably be greatly reduced.

The question here naturally arises, were former candidates subjected to a test like this?

What the exact standard of former years has been, your Committee were unable to ascertain. They are inclined to the belief that there has been no fixed standard. The articles of agreement between the Trustees and the School Committee require the same qualifications as are necessary for entrance into the Boston High School; but it is well known that most of the boys received there have not possessed these qualifications. Indeed, it is acknowledged by gentlemen, members of the Local Committee from the Board of Trustees, that they have been admitted without strict regard to scholarship. The School Committee have not complained of this, because the school was new, and

they were willing it should have that number of scholars thought necessary to complete its organization. There seemed to be an understanding that the standard should be gradually raised to the required point.

An advance was expected last year; but it was not made, and the Grammar Schools were drawn upon for an unusually large number of scholars. Had the Boston High School admitted as many pupils last year in proportion as the Roxbury school did, it would have received over *three hundred* instead of less than *one hundred*.

The standard of former years, if, indeed, any has been observed, has been too low; too low for the best good of the High School, as well as for the Grammar Schools.

It was the intention of the Local Committee, doubtless, this year to put the standard where the Articles of Agreement place it.

Their manner of estimating the qualifications of the candidates, however, has led them, we think, to require more than has ever been done in Boston, and much more than was this year required, as they have been compelled to lower the standard there, in order to obtain the proper number of pupils.

Your Committee are therefore of the opinion, that, in view of the practice of former years, no one could rationally have expected to find in our Grammar Schools, boys qualified to enter the High School upon these new terms of admission. And had it been publicly stated, as it ought to have been, what qualifications were to be required, these candidates would not have presented themselves, parents and teachers would have understood the whole matter, and this inquiry why thirty-six out of thirty-seven candidates for the High School had been rejected, would never have been raised.

Your Committee deem it proper, in this connection, to notice an attempt which has been made to show that our schools are not on a par with those of the adjoining city.

It is but necessary to say that the number of candidates for admission here would have been but *ten*, the ratio being the same as in Boston, and that had the same test been applied here as there, some of these would have been admitted, notwithstanding they are on an average nearly *two years younger*, and notwithstanding the depletion the Grammar Schools have suffered in former years. Your Committee, therefore, feel justified in coming to the conclusion, that the Grammar Schools of Roxbury, even should no improvement be made in them, will furnish a larger number of scholars, proportionally, and at a less average age, for the High School, than do the Grammar Schools of Boston. We do not wish to overlook the deficiencies of our schools. That they are not perfect is well known. Neither would we have them robbed of their just dues, and we but speak our conviction, when we assert that any fair comparison with schools elsewhere will not result unfavorably to our own.

In view of the fact that no public notice had been given of the change in the terms of admission to the High School, and the consequent disappointment of the candidates and their parents, your Committee intended to propose a re-examination upon a modified standard, so that the most advanced of them might be received. They were assured by individual members of the Board of Trustees, some of whom are members of the Local Committee, that such a request would be acceded to on their part. But, much to their surprise, they learned from a public notice, that at a full meeting of the Local Committee of that school, called especially to consider the matter now under investigation by this Board, it was *unanimously* voted that such an examination would be inexpedient.

Your Committee, therefore, content themselves with merely reporting the facts, proposing no action in this direction.

The nature of the connection existing between the Trus-

tees and this Board has forced itself so strongly upon the minds of your Committee during this investigation, that they feel impelled to devote the remainder of this report to its consideration.

By a law of the State, every town containing 4000 inhabitants is obliged to support a High School.

In 1839, the town of Roxbury was relieved from the operation of that law by the passage of the following "Act Relative to the Grammar School in Roxbury:"

SEC. 1ST. The Grammar School in the easterly part of the town of Roxbury shall hereafter be deemed such a school as the town is required to maintain by the fifth section of the twenty-third chapter of the Revised Statutes ; *provided*, that said school shall always be a free school, and shall, in all respects, fulfil the conditions of the section aforesaid; and, *provided also*, that the statistics of said school be included in the annual return of the School Committee of Roxbury.

SEC. 2D.—All the powers and duties assigned by law to School Committees shall pertain with respect to said Grammar School to the Trustees thereof solely, agreeably to their act of incorporation.

SEC. 3D.—This act shall take effect as soon as the town of Roxbury, and the Trustees of said school respectively, shall have accepted the same by legal votes, and made the necessary arrangements for complying with the first section hereof, and shall continue in force during the pleasure of said Trustees and their successors, and no longer.—[Approved April 9, 1839.

Upon the acceptance of this Act, the Town agreed to pay over to the Trustees towards the maintenance of said school, \$500 per annum.

This continued till 1852, when, it being determined to establish an English High School, the School Committee

and Board of Trustees entered into an agreement as follows—viz.:

“The Act of 1839, in relation to this school, is to be complied with by both parties in all its provisions.”

“For the purpose of affording the School Committee every possible facility, consistent with our duties as Trustees, for visiting, inspecting, and examining the English High School, and becoming familiarly acquainted with its condition, and the progress of the scholars, the Examining Committee appointed by the Trustees shall hereafter consist of not less than three, nor more than six members, and shall act in connection with a committee appointed annually for the purpose by the School Committee, in the manner hereinafter designated.

The joint committee to be called the Local Committee of the High School.

The Chairman of the Committee on the part of the Trustees shall be, ex officio, Chairman of the Joint Committee.

Regular meetings of the Committee in relation to the English department, whether for the purpose of examination, or for consultation as to the condition and studies of the department—and for canvassing the merits of candidates for election of master or assistant master of the school, when vacancies may exist—shall be open to all members of the Committee, and each member shall be notified by the Chairman of the Committee, or the Secretary of the Board, of the time and place of such meeting.

Admissions to the school are to be made annually.

The standard of qualification for admission to the English department, to be the same as to the High School in Boston.

The examination of pupils for admission to the English department, to take place in the presence of the Committee of the English department; and to be conducted by

the master, or assistant master, whose decision shall be final, unless the committee on the part of the Trustees, after conferring with the sub-committee of the School Committee, shall decide otherwise.

All boys, members of the Washington and Dearborn Schools, who are qualified for admission to the High School by age and attainment, shall be forthwith transferred to the same for examination, and not allowed to remain longer at said schools, unless upon such examination they shall be found to be deficient in the requisite qualifications. The masters of the school shall in all cases be appointed by the Trustees, after having received the written report of the committee who shall previously have canvassed the qualifications of candidates; and all repairs and alterations to the building shall be under the control of the Trustees.

The studies to be pursued in the English department shall be prescribed by the Trustees by vote; but shall include all which are required by the fifth section of the 23d chapter of the Revised Statutes.

It is expected that the City will appropriate \$500 per annum, as formerly, for the use of the Trustees, and a larger sum, if in the judgment of the Board of Trustees and School Committee it shall be necessary.

This arrangement may be terminated by either party, after notice having been given; except that the appropriation of money shall continue until the end of the quarter which may have been commenced when 'the arrangement shall terminate.' "

After the adoption of the above Agreement, the School Committee, in a communication to the Mayor, as Chairman of the Committee on Public Instruction, say "that they have on their part effected an arrangement with the Trustees, by which they hope to establish a first-rate English High School," and "that it will be necessary to appropri-

ate \$1000, or \$500 in addition to the former appropriation of \$500 to the Trustees."

They "regret that they are obliged to ask for so large an appropriation, but they found it impossible to provide such a school as would be satisfactory to the citizens and creditable to the city, at a less rate." This arrangement with the Trustees was, doubtless, made from motives of economy, as the city could not support a High School without a much larger expenditure than was proposed. The actual appropriations, however, have been \$2000 for 1853, \$3000 for 1854, \$2700 for 1855, \$3200 for 1856, and \$2600 for 1857—sums large enough to pay the whole, or nearly the whole, expenses of the School.

Why the amounts asked for have been so much larger than the one first proposed, your Committee have not ascertained.

At the very first your Committee were impressed with the idea that there was but little power in the hands of the School Committee in regard to the English High School, and as they have pursued their investigations that little has become *less*. A glance at the position of the Trustees will show how matters stand.

The "Grammar School in the easterly part of Roxbury," was established somewhere between 1642 and 1645. Various bequests were made in its favor, and many of the citizens of the town bound themselves, or their estates, to pay a certain tax for its support. It was under the charge of Feoffees. In 1671, the minister and the two senior deacons of the First Parish, and their successors, were made Trustees of the estate of Thomas Bell, from whose will we insert the following extract:

— "I give to Mr. John Eliot, Minister of the Church of Christ in Roxbury, in New England, and Captain Isaac Johnson, and to one such other like godly person, now bearing office in the said Church, and their successors, the

Minister and other such two head officers of the said Church in Roxbury, as the whole church there, from time to time, shall best approve successively from time to time, forever: all my messuages or tenements, lands and hereditaments, with their and every of their appurtenances, situate, lying and being at Roxbury, in New England aforesaid, in parts beyond the seas; to have and to hold to the said minister and officers of the said Church of Roxbury, for the time being, and their successors from time to time forever, in trust only, notwithstanding, to and for the maintenance of a school-master and free school for the teaching and instructing of *poor men's children* at Roxbury aforesaid, forever, and to be for no other use, intent or purpose whatever."

It was decided that the school meant by Mr. Bell was the one already established.

Its affairs were therefore managed by the Feoffees and Trustees in conjunction.

The government of one school by two distinct Boards was not found to work so well as was desired. Therefore, in 1789, the General Court, on petition of several of the inhabitants of Roxbury, by an Act of Incorporation, united both into one. From that Act it will be necessary to make only the following extracts:

SEC. 6. *Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That the said Trustees and their successors shall be the true and *sole* visitors, Trustees, and Governors of said school, in perpetual succession forever, to be continued in the way and manner hereinafter pointed out, with full power and authority to elect by ballot a President, Secretary, Treasurer, and such other officers as they shall judge necessary and convenient, and to make and ordain such by-laws, rules and orders, for the good order and government of the said school, from time to time, as to them the

said Trustees and their successors shall, according to the various occasions and circumstances thereof, appear most fit and requisite, either with or without penalties, all which shall be observed by the officers, scholars, and servants of the said school.

SEC. 8. *Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That the number of the said Trustees shall not, at any one time, consist of more than thirteen, nor less than nine, five of whom shall constitute a quorum for transacting business, and a major part of the members present at any stated meeting thereof, shall decide all questions that may properly come before them.

SEC. 13. *Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That it shall and may be lawful for the inhabitants of the said town of Roxbury, at any legal meeting thereof, not exceeding once in any one year, to *call on the said Trustees for a statement of their general accounts, at the then last audit thereof, and it shall be the duty of the Trustees aforesaid, or some one of their officers, for the time being, to exhibit an attested copy of such statement accordingly.*

It will be seen from this, that the Trustees cannot delegate any of their powers to the School Committee, or any other persons.

They must be "sole visitors, Trustees and Governors of said school." No doubt they can advise with others, School Committees or private citizens, and receive any suggestions they please; and it is perfectly proper for them, if they are so disposed, to indulge this Board in designating who of its members shall have the honor of suggesting and—*retiring*; but they are to be the only judges of what is best and proper, and the entire control of the school *must* be in their hands. By courtesy of the Trus-

tees, the School Committee of Roxbury *may* have some influence in the management of said school, and by their own right, under the agreement of June 28, 1852, they can report appropriations for its support, and send up scholars for its supply; indeed, this they are bound to do; but they have no more legal control over it than have the School Committee of San Francisco.

Your committee are strongly of the opinion that the Public Schools of this city should all be under one control. Different Boards of Committees for different grades of schools, have never worked well. There has always been jarring between them, and the system of instruction has lacked that unity and completeness which ought to characterize it.

In Boston, for many years, the Primary School Board was distinct from the Grammar School Board. The infelicities attendant upon the workings of the two, led to the abolishment of the former, and the transfer of its powers to the latter. The citizens of Roxbury expect those whom they have elected for that purpose, to take charge of their schools; when any trouble arises respecting them, it is to their own servants they come for explanation.

The Board of Trustees are a close corporation, having full power to do as they please; and from their decision there is no appeal.

The citizen whose communication was referred to your Committee, requests that a re-examination of candidates for admission to the English High School be had. That request this Board has not the power to grant. Its members can only put themselves in the attitude of humble petitioners to another Board, to which they have transferred all their own power.

This state of things your Committee think should no longer exist, especially as there are now no economical

reasons for it. They, therefore, conclude their report by recommending the passage of the following order :

Ordered, That the arrangement made between the School Committee and the Trustees of the Grammar School in the easterly part of Roxbury, in reference to the English department of said school, be terminated on the 31st day of October next. And that the Secretary of this Board be, and he hereby is, directed to give proper notice thereof to the said Trustees.

Respectfully submitted,

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| EDWIN RAY, | } | <i>Committee.</i> |
| J. N. BREWER, | | |
| J. S. SHAILER. | | |

Roxbury, Sept. 2, 1857.

